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Research Study

Post-Mao Party-Military Relations: The Role of the General Political Department

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PR 76 10076
December 1976

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Approved For Release 2004/07/08 : CIA-RDP79T00889A000900080001-2

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
OFFICE OF POLITICAL RESEARCH

December 1976

POST-MAO PARTY-MILITARY RELATIONS:
THE ROLE OF THE GENERAL POLITICAL DEPARTMENT



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Note: Several offices provided valuable assistance in the preparation of this study. These included OCI, OSR, and CRS within the CIA, and components of the DIA. Research and analysis was completed in early November 1976. Comments and questions will be welcomed by the author 

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
PRINCIPAL JUDGMENTS	1
DISCUSSION	5
I. INTRODUCTION	5
II. THE GPD: LINKING PARTY AND MILITARY.....	5
A. Organizational Relationships	5
1. Structural Relationship to the Party	5
2. Position in the PLA	6
B. Internal Organization	8
C. Functions	8
1. Control	8
a. Career Management	8
b. Surveillance	10
c. Committee Structure	10
2. Indoctrination	11
3. Morale-Building	12
4. Other Functions	12
5. In Sum	13
III. CURRENT STATUS	13
A. As of November 1976	13
B. Whose Political Asset?	13
IV. DEVELOPMENTS AND OUTLOOK	14
A. Developments	14
1. Strengthening the Organization	14
2. Status of the Director	14
B. Outlook	15
Annex: A Brief History of the GPD	17

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PRINCIPAL JUDGMENTS

The most important function of the General Political Department (GPD) is that of ensuring the obedience of the military establishment to the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party. As part of this, the GPD focuses loyalty on the Party's Chairman. In this role, the GPD is expected to be of considerable value to the newly elected Chairman, Hua Kuo-feng, in consolidating his position.

The GPD'S Place in the Political Structure

The GPD is at once a Party and a military organization. It is a major component of the headquarters of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and is manned by uniformed military personnel. Yet it is also a Party body, functioning primarily on behalf of the Party.

Organizationally, the GPD is directly subordinate to the powerful Military Affairs Committee (MAC), the Politburo's subcommittee for military matters. The GPD works for the MAC as its political staff.

Its principal mission is to insure the PLA's loyalty to and support of the Party. To do this, the GPD has been given broad powers in the fields of Party organization within the PLA, personnel actions, propaganda, education, cultural activities, political loyalty, internal security, morale, and military justice. The GPD is also authorized to oversee strictly military activities, such as planning, training, operations, and logistic support, and to make sure that officers and units performing these functions are efficient and are carrying out the Party's wishes.

Its supervision of the PLA's "political work" apparatus gives the GPD potent levers of influence over military personnel below its level. There is no avenue to success except through Party membership and cooperation with the system of Party controls. The system seems to work; the bulk of the PLA is responsive to the Party.

Role in Hua's 'Coup'

It is not yet known (as of mid-November 1976) what role the GPD played in the overnight purge of the four Leftist leaders in early October. The most important of the Leftists, Chang Chun-chiao, the

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fourth-ranking Party leader, was also the Director of the GPD. The organization appears to have survived the purge of its Director, but an investigation into its ties with the purged leaders is probably taking place.

Chang's role in the Cultural Revolution, as well as lack of time, prevented Chang from expanding his influence in the PLA. Chang and the other Leftist leaders were unpopular with senior military officers, and during the year or so that Chang had headed the organization, he failed to establish a system of controlling it through a set of longtime proteges. Consequently, the GPD's potential for becoming an asset in a contest for leadership of the Party was not tested. After Hua succeeded in becoming Party Chairman, however, the GPD joined his camp at once, and in so doing it no doubt represented the political preferences of the bulk of the PLA's top leadership.

Developments Worth Watching

Two developments have affected the GPD over the past decade in ways that are likely to influence its future performance:

- The first is the gradual but steady strengthening of the organization since the Cultural Revolution. During that campaign, the GPD was heavily purged and sidelined temporarily as an important body. Now the GPD appears to have its full complement of senior personnel and subdepartments, and it is once again issuing directives on its own authority. This trend points to further strengthening of its organizational structure and a closer alignment between the GPD and conservative military interests.
- The other development has been reflected in the professional status and Party rank of GPD directors over the last decade. The status of the GPD Director has been elevated in the Party from that of an ordinary member of the Central Committee to Politburo member to Politburo Standing Committee member; at the same time the directorship has migrated out of the military's political career channel. Of the last two directors, one was a lifelong commander and his successor was a senior Party leader with no military experience. At this writing, the GPD has no Director; the next incumbent will provide a good indicator of the balance of political influence between Chairman Hua and senior military leaders. Initially, Hua probably will bow to the PLA and appoint a professional political officer to head the

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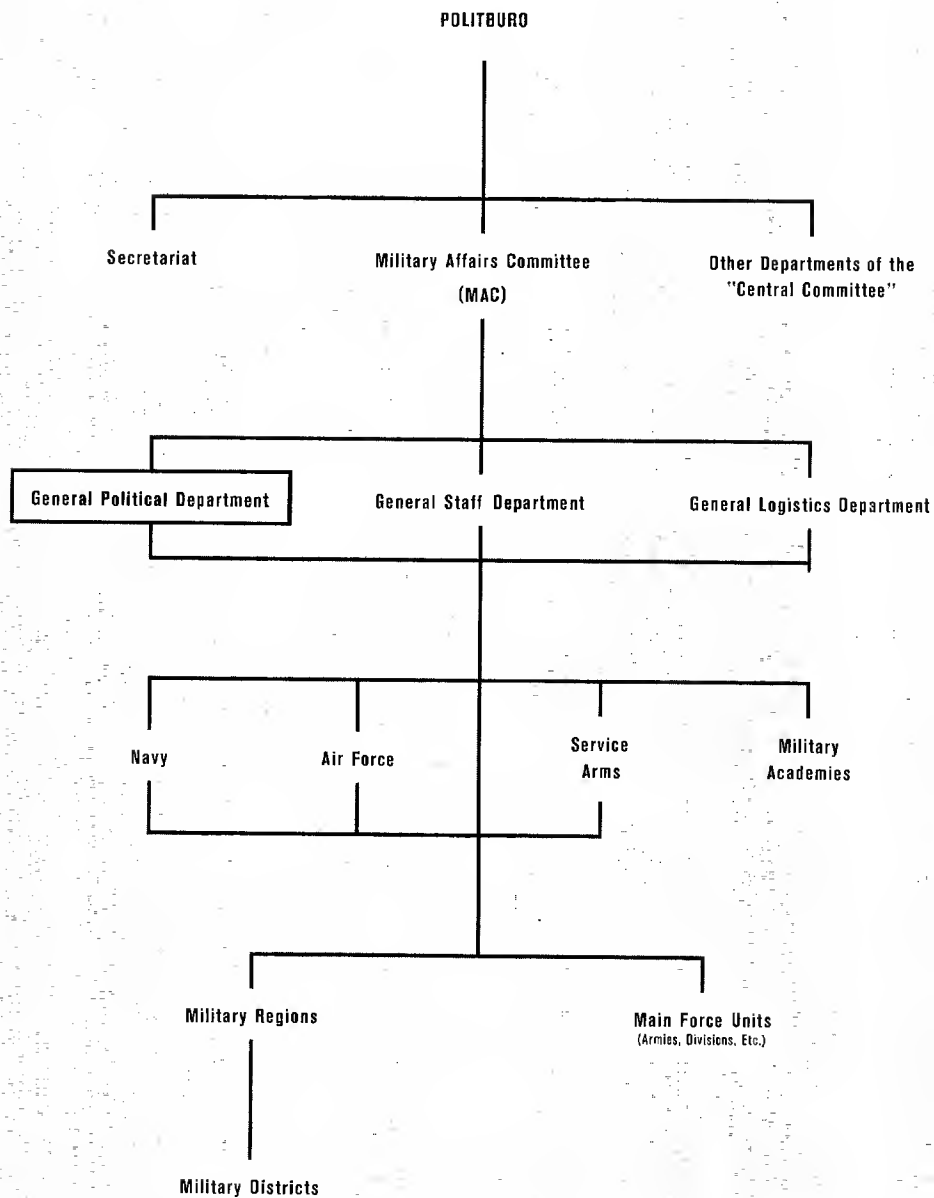
GPD. At some point, however, Hua may want his own man in that position and might even name another career Party cadre to the job.

Outlook for the GPD

The outlook for the GPD—as for the regime as a whole—will probably be governed by the balance to be struck between Chairman Hua and the military. In compensation for their support of Hua, military leaders may press for a larger military budget or a greater relaxation of tensions with the Soviet Union than Hua and other Party leaders would favor. Hua needs to be able to resist unacceptable demands, and it thus will be to his long-term interest to strengthen his control over the military.

Even if Chairman Hua quickly asserts his leadership over the PLA, he can never be fully confident of the undivided loyalty of his military subordinates. He will need the indoctrinating and watch-dog services of the GPD, which itself will have to be watched and periodically reorganized. Whether Hua will in fact be able to control the military is still an open question, but the GPD is likely to play an important part in his effort to do so.

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Figure 1. Position of the General Political Department.

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DISCUSSION

I. INTRODUCTION

This study is part of a larger effort to advance our understanding of the political role played by the military in China. The military's political influence has again been demonstrated. Surely the Party's new Chairman, Hua Kuo-feng, could not have risen to the chairmanship of both the Party and its Military Affairs Committee (MAC) or have destroyed the leaders of the Leftists group* so quickly if he had not received strong military support.

For the moment, the broad interests of the career Party and civilian leaders like Hua and the professional military leaders appear to parallel each other. However, it may not be long before they begin to diverge. Hua came to power with the late Chairman Mao's strong support but without a broad power base of his own. His heavy indebtedness to the military for its backing will remain. Yet if he is to consolidate his position as the principal leader of China, he must re-establish the Party's traditional domination of the military. Thus, a period of Party-military tension is likely to follow the current season of ebullient goodwill.

This study will center on the institutional relationship between the Party and the military as well as take into account the interests of the main actors. The paper's thesis is that the relationship between the Party and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is complex and that the military establishment is vulnerable to manipulation by Party leaders as well as *vice versa*.

The General Political Department (GPD) is the core of this relationship for three reasons. First, it is an important military institution that bridges the dividing line between the Party and the PLA. Second, it

*In this paper "Leftist" is used to refer to those leaders who, within the Chinese political spectrum, have demonstrated a preference for radical, ideologically charged views. The four most prominent members of this group were arrested on 6-7 October 1976, and have clearly been purged.

performs important functions in the PLA for the Party, especially for the Party Chairman. Among these are its duties to focus military loyalty on the Party's Chairman and to ferret out opposition to his policies in the military establishment. Finally, the GPD could also help prevent a military coup—or at least prevent large numbers from joining it.

Thus, the GPD could play a key role in consolidating or undermining Chairman Hua's position in the period of Party-military tension that seems likely to face the PRC.*

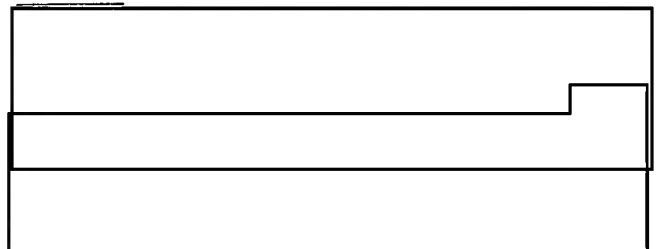
II. THE GPD: LINKING PARTY AND MILITARY

A. Organizational Relationships

The GPD is a fusion of Party and military organizations. The Party's formal definition of the GPD states that it is "the highest leadership organ in charge of the Party's ideological and organizational work in the whole army."** It is an integral component of the national headquarters of the PLA, and it is manned by professional military officers. Yet it is also a Party body; it functions primarily on behalf of the Party, and its responsibility is principally to the Party.

1. Structural Relationship to the Party

In its Party context, the GPD is directly subordinate to the powerful MAC (see Figure 1, p. 4).



**Chinese Communist Party Central Committee's "Regulations Concerning Political Work in the People's Liberation Army," first promulgated in 1963. These "regulations" are still in force.

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The MAC is one of the principal organs of the Central Committee and is, in reality, the Politburo's subcommittee for military matters. The late Chairman Mao headed the MAC for four decades; it is now headed by Chairman Hua and includes ranking members of the Politburo and many senior military leaders (some of whom are also Politburo members). The MAC sets military policy, makes all major military decisions, and controls the PLA's best combat forces. The GPD is described in official documents as the "political department of the MAC," the GPD has maintained this relationship with the MAC since the GPD's origin in 1931.* It implements the MAC's political decisions and policies, and it wields the MAC's coercive instruments of control—the bodies which conduct surveillance of the military, supervise its internal Party system, and oversee personnel decisions below its own level.

There are other ties between the GPD and the Central Committee (meaning the Politburo). The GPD is nominally subordinate and in some way responsive to the Central Committee Secretariat, which is directly subordinate to the Politburo Standing Committee. Although the exact relationship between the GPD and the Secretariat is not known, presumably the GPD reports in part to and receives some direction from this key Party organization. The GPD also assists the Central Committee's "political security department" [redacted]

[redacted] assisting this sensitive agency's covert agents who operate within the military establishment and report separately to the Center.

The close linkage between the Party's leading bodies—the Politburo, the Secretariat, and the MAC—and the GPD was personified until recently in Chang Chun-chiao, who was Director of the GPD, member of the Politburo Standing Committee, *de facto* Secretary-General (head of the Secretariat), and a leading member of the MAC, and in these positions was Hua Kuo-feng's principal rival for power.

2. Position in the PLA

In the PLA, the GPD is one of three "general departments"—the other two being the General Staff Department and the General Logistics Department. These three, plus the headquarters of the navy, air

* For an account of the origins and history of the GPD, see the Annex to this paper.

force, service arms, and senior military schools, make up the PRC's national military leadership.

The GPD's relationship to these components of the PLA headquarters—and to the rest of the military establishment—is primarily to the Party committees and other political organizations, such as the Communist Youth League, within these bodies. Throughout the PLA, as in the government, each organization is governed by a Party committee. GPD instructions and orders, for instance, are directed to the Party committees below its own level (see Figure 2, p. 7). The Party committee structure cascades downward from the MAC to the lowest level unit—the infantry company or its equivalent. These committees are normally headed by the unit's first political officer, although there are examples of commanders performing that role.* Where the commander is first secretary, he presumably passes the GPD's directives to the political officer.

In addition to these Party committees, there are "political departments" attached to all military unit Party committees—except for the two lowest levels, the companies and battalions. These political departments are mirror-images of the GPD, assisting their respective committees in carrying out routine "political work."** This includes not only political work in

* Among the 11 Military Region (MR) Party committees, the three known first secretaries are MR Commanders (Canton, Wuhan, and Tsinan MRs), and a fourth recently died (Commander of Fuchou MR). This apparent systematic deviation from the principle (at other levels) that the first political officer serves as first secretary of the committee could be an indication of a shift of power away from political officers to commanders. More likely, however, it reflects a successful effort by the PLA to keep the leadership of MR Party Committees in military hands.

The nominal first political officers of these four MRs are civilian Party leaders. Senior Party leaders in Peking evidently did not want these *provincial* civilian Party chiefs to head, concurrently, *regional* military Party committees. Such an aggregation of power by local civilian leaders may have appeared threatening to central Party leaders, as did the former regional Party bureaus that were abolished in 1966.

In these four cases, and probably in others, leadership of the MR Party committee has been vested in the MR's highest-ranking professional military officer, the commander. (The distinction between military and civilian Party leader at the MR level becomes blurred, in any case, because all MR commanders are important Party figures in their own right: three MR commanders are full members of the Politburo, and all the others are Central Committee members.)

** "Political work" is a catchall term that includes indoctrination, personnel matters, cultural activities, sports and other morale-building activities, and surveillance.

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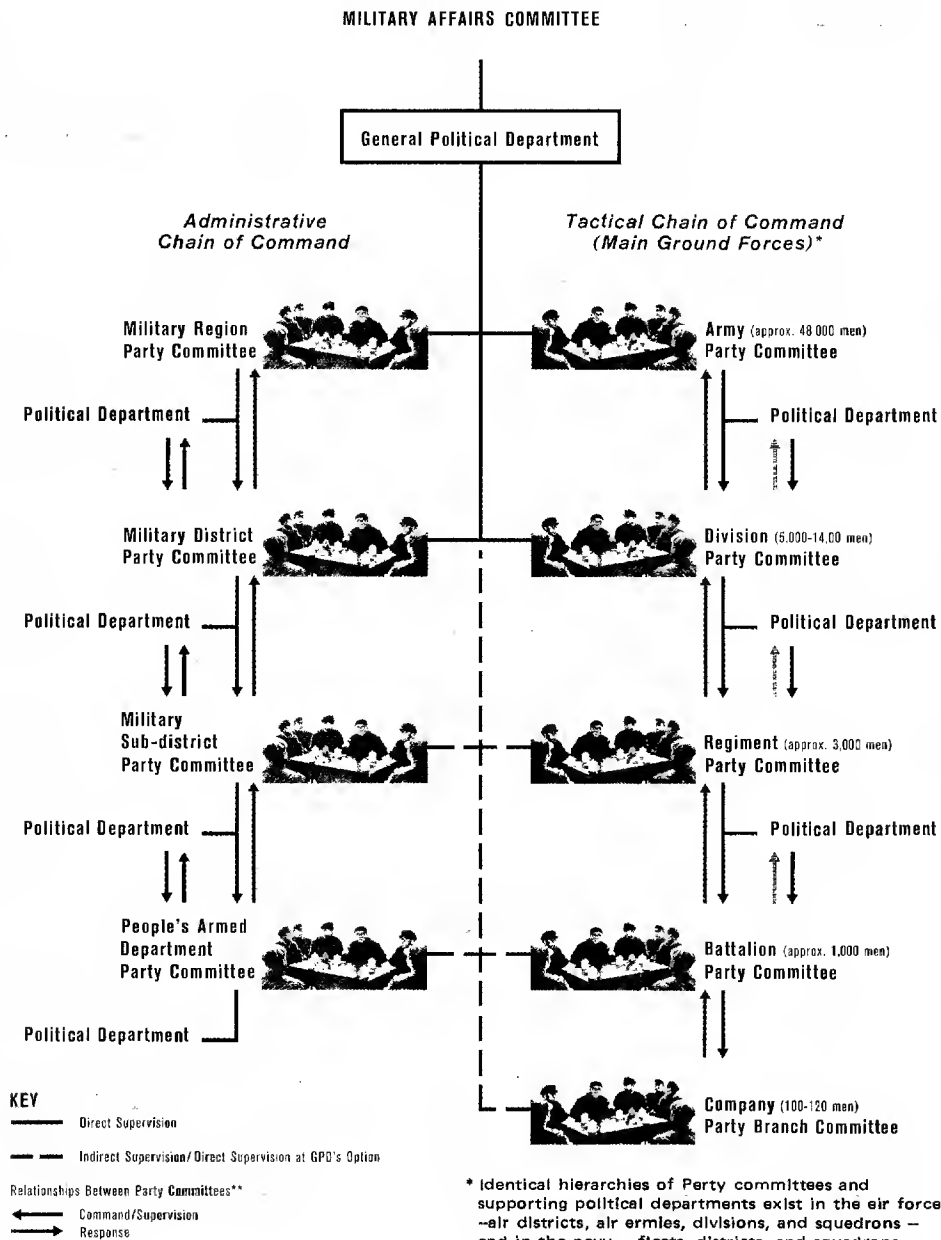


Figure 2. Party Structure Within the Chinese Armed Forces

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their own unit, but also supervision of political work in their subordinate units two echelons down. For example, the political department of a regiment exercises supervision of political work in its own battalions and also in its battalions' companies. The GPD itself is responsible for political work in the two echelons below its level—in army and division-level combat units and in the Military Region and Military District (MD) headquarters, which are essentially administrative organizations.

Some ambiguity exists between the hierarchy of Party committees and their political departments. It might seem that these two kinds of organizations are separate entities and would logically have separate chains of command or channels of communication.*

Recent evidence disputes this picture, however, supporting a contrary view that the Party committees make up the principal line of military as well as political authority and that each of these committees acts through its three principal components—its staff, political, and logistics departments. The political department of each unit is simply the political staff of its parent Party committee, just as the GPD is essentially the MAC's political work staff. When the GPD issues orders, these orders are probably received by all military bodies below the general department level as though they had been issued by the MAC itself.**

B. Internal Organization

The GPD is organized internally into 10 or 11 subdivisions (see Figure 3, p. 9 for details). Although the Propaganda Department normally outranks all other departments, the Organization and Security departments are probably more influential—and more feared.

* The clearest statement of this view can be found in John Gittings, *The Role of the Chinese Army* (Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 107, 108, and 306.

** If such were not the case, there would be serious deficiencies in the system. For instance, the GPD would have difficulty issuing orders to MR Party Committees since the first secretary of these committees (whether commander or first political officer) is probably a member of the MAC, the GPD's parent body. Thus, the GPD would be in the position of trying to supervise MR first secretaries who were themselves members of a higher-level organization. This would be a virtually impossible situation.

C. Functions

The main function of the GPD is to insure Party control over the armed forces. To do this, the GPD enjoys broad powers: it judges the performance of senior officers under its jurisdiction and rewards or punishes them; it covertly investigates political attitudes and isolates PLA members suspected of disloyalty; and it indoctrinates, monitors the impact of its indoctrination, and carries out a multitude of morale-building activities.

The GPD's work consists mainly of administration and policy implementation. The Party system in the PLA is too extensive, however, for the GPD to oversee in detail. There are, for example, at least 15,000 "branch" committees (company level) in the ground forces alone.

According to Central Committee documents, the GPD is supposed to draw up plans and regulations, review PLA activities to ensure that these plans and regulations have been carried out; to carry out its own investigations and studies; to identify and publicize model individuals and units; to coordinate its activities with the other two general departments; and to cooperate with the political police of the "political security department" of the Central Party apparatus and with the Ministry of Public Security.

1. Control

a. Career Management

Probably the greatest power of the GPD lies in its supervision of personnel actions and career development. The GPD is under orders from the Central Committee to implement the Party's cadre policies and procedures throughout the PLA.

There is little detailed information on how the GPD carries out this task. Presumably it formulates general policy guidelines and monitors their implementation at all levels below the general departments.

Political departments in units below the GPD hold the service records and political dossiers of the personnel in their units. These political departments periodically evaluate each officer's performance and recommend his promotion, demotion, or reassignment. This recommendation is reviewed by the unit's Party committee, which makes decisions on personnel matters subject to review by the next higher Party committee. Following GPD cadre policy, these politi-

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General Political Department

Secretary-General's Office

- In-house administration.

Propaganda Department

- General responsibility for indoctrination of the PLA, supervision of political movements, selection and popularization of heroes, and so on.

Probably the largest and highest-ranking of the GPD's subdivisions; Propaganda Department personnel are usually listed ahead of the leaders of other GPD components.

Culture Department

- Carries out Central Committee policy regarding art and literature in the PLA; trains national-level military theatrical troupes, musical ensembles and bands, and oversees PLA cultural performances on national holidays.

Organization Department

- Monitors the Party committee system in the PLA; implements the Party's personnel policies, thereby affecting all members of the armed forces, especially officers. This is also a large and powerful GPD element; in terms of the Party's power over individual careers, it may well be the most powerful.

Security Department

- This is the GPD's political investigative force; it works closely with the Organization Dept. (above), with the Ministry of Public Security, and with the Party's own more powerful "political security department."

Education Department

- Administers the GPD's political schools and establishes political curricula for other military professional and service schools.

Physical Culture and Sports Department (?)

- If this organization has been reinstated since the Cultural Revolution, it would define sports and physical culture policy for the PLA and provide general supervision and stimulation for PLA-wide sports competitions and meets.

Liaison Department

- Coordination with other Party and government bodies and with friendly foreign military organizations.

Youth Work Department

- Probably directs the Communist Youth League within the PLA.

Journalism Department

- Probably is responsible for PLA-wide publications, such as Liberation Army Daily, and for policy regarding all other military publications; also probably provides training and administrative support to reporters and other military media workers in national-level military organs.

Military Procuratorate

- Administers policy related to military justice and oversees military courts.

Figure 3. Internal Structure of the General Political Department

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cal departments also recommend rewards and punishments. The GPD probably reviews the personnel work of the 11 MRs, the three Fleet headquarters, and the army-level units of the ground and air forces; the GPD may also monitor this work at division- and MD-level.

Thus, by the time an officer becomes the commander or first political officer of a regiment or squadron (equivalent to the rank of colonel in most Western military organizations), he has probably come to the attention of the GPD. Its influence is probably most direct and crucial for the stratum of officers from colonel up through the middle-ranking general officer.*

When an officer is promoted to MR commander or first political officer (approximately equal to a three-star general in the US system), he probably owes his new standing primarily to the MAC and to senior leaders of the Party. Even though MR leaders are members (or candidate members) of the MAC—and thus rank above the GPD—they are still nominally subordinate to the PLA's general departments including the GPD and must respond to orders of the general departments, taking them as coming from the MAC itself. A negative report even on an MR leader from the GPD could have an adverse effect on his career.

Beyond supervision of careers, the GPD has controls over other personnel matters. The GPD sets leave policy and regulates the care of military dependents. It also looks after officers after they retire or are transferred out of the military. The PLA's political workers try to find suitable employment for ex-PLA personnel as well as care for their dependents after they die. Each former PLA officer's or enlisted man's political dossier is turned over to the receiving civilian Party committee when he is transferred out of the PLA.

b. Surveillance

Another potent instrument of influence is the GPD's political investigative force, with a system of informers that operates covertly throughout the PLA, with power to make arrests. This force is supposed to

* Equivalents to Western military ranks are necessarily imprecise because the Chinese abandoned the use of conventional ranks in 1965 after using them for 10 years. A PLA officer is addressed according to his current responsibility—regimental first political officer so-and-so—or division commander so-and-so—rather than by a specific rank.

protect the ideological purity of the PLA. Its reports and assessments go into each PLA member's dossier and either help or hurt his career. For severe cases of political or other misbehavior, military prosecutors and military courts back up the GPD's political security system.

The GPD also cooperates closely with the Party's own "central political security department," and Central's agents operate covertly within the military (as elsewhere in society), report separately to the Party leadership, and probably handle the most serious and delicate security cases, where actual disloyalty and conspiracy are suspected.

c. Committee Structure

Beyond the controls that affect individuals—control of dossiers and careers, and control through fear of political spies—much of the GPD's strength lies in its mission to supervise the Party committee structure in the PLA. From time to time, the Politburo has directed that the Party committee system in the military be strengthened. These occasions have provided opportunities for the GPD to re-examine the composition of the PLA's major Party committees and to recommend changes in their makeup. Occasionally, the MAC has ordered the GPD to strengthen the position of the first political officer and raise the priority assigned to political work.

The position of the first political officer relative to the commander is the keystone in the Party's (and the GPD's) system of control. From its early days, the Party has insisted on a system of dual command in its armed forces whereby the commander and the first political officer share responsibility and command. Although this relationship has always been a source of tension, it has worked more smoothly in China than in the Soviet Union, where it was eventually modified in favor of concentrating authority in the commander.

The Chinese system is deliberately biased in favor of the first political officer. In theory, the Party declares that authority in each unit rests with the collective leadership of the whole Party committee. This is supposed to mean that all members of a unit's committee are accountable for the performance of their unit. In practice, though, this usually means that the first secretary of the committee is the unit's dominant officer. According to the Party's own regulations, the first secretary is normally the unit's

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first political officer, although occasionally the commander serves in that role. Even when the commander is the first secretary, however, the first political officer has the right, under certain conditions, to countermand the commander's orders and even to arrest him if he is suspected of counterrevolutionary acts.

Since the early 1960s, the GPD has been under orders to pay special attention to the functioning of this system, especially at company level, thus assuring continuing GPD evaluation of the Party committee and political work system down to the lowest organizational level.

2. Indoctrination

The Party's current charter to the GPD orders it to "put ideology in first place." This is logical, given the Party's conception of the PLA as a Party army. It also reflects the extreme difficulties the Party experienced in the late 1920s when it began to build its own army. Then, when the Party's survival depended on weak forces made up largely of illiterates, Party leaders feared that if their armed units were wiped out by the

Nationalists, the Communist cause in China would fail. Referring to those days, Chu Te, a founder of the Chinese Red Army, once told an American journalist that, "We aimed so to train our men that even if only one escaped alive he would be able to rise up and lead the people."

Today, indoctrination is still intense. Much effort is spent in focusing loyalty on the Party Chairman, the "Central Committee," and the MAC. About one-third of the average soldier's time is spent in some form of indoctrination or other activity under the political officer's supervision. About one-third of each year's recruits into the PLA—300,000 to 400,000 persons out of around 1,000,000 annual recruits—become Party members. (These soldiers usually retain their Party membership after demobilization, and over the years, have come to comprise a sizeable portion of the total membership of the Party, probably 20 to 25 percent. This suggests that the GPD speaks to a significant audience not only inside the military, but in the civilian sector as well.)

While he is in the PLA, the average enlisted man and junior officer is subjected to constant indoctrina-



Focusing PLA Loyalty on Chairman Hua: One of the GPD's Jobs

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tion. Officers and men are required to listen to lectures; they read and discuss the GPD's national newspaper, the *Chieh-fang Chun Pao* (*Liberation Army Daily*); they criticize their own and each other's political errors during periodic group confession and "struggle" meetings; and their evenings are often spent in watching movies or plays heavily laden with political messages. The officer corps is made up almost entirely of Party members, most of whom have received at least some special training in leading political work. Many officers can expect to attend, at some point in their careers, one of the GPD's political work colleges or institutes. Even if they choose not to specialize in political work, PLA officers probably receive some formal political instruction in every military school that they attend. Ultimately, all political training comes under GPD supervision.

3. Morale-Building

The political work system also monopolizes morale-building activities. Sports activities are organized and supervised by political work personnel. All cultural events are sponsored by the political work system, and unit reading rooms are filled with political reading matter to be read under the observation of a uniformed political worker.

The GPD is also interested in the material well-being of the troops, although primary responsibility in this area rests with the General Logistics Department and its subordinate supply systems. The Central Committee has instructed the GPD, however, that it must assist the logistics organizations in improving the welfare of military personnel.

In addition, the GPD, in coordination with local civilian authorities, is supposed to take care of disabled and discharged servicemen, their dependents, and the dependents of "martyrs." The fact that political officers can manipulate the material welfare of individual PLA members and their dependents gives the GPD and its agents additional levers of influence.

Finally, the GPD works continuously on two programs that are utopian in their objectives but give the GPD additional bureaucratic stature. Both of these programs began during the earliest days of the Chinese Communist armed forces, and while neither is unique to the PLA, both have been given greater emphasis in China than in the USSR or Eastern Europe.

One of these programs aims at fostering "revolutionary unity" between officers and men. This program seeks to prevent elitism in the officer corps. Nearly all visible differences between the uniforms of soldiers and officers have been eliminated. For instance, all ranks and insignia were abolished in 1965 as part of this program. Officers are instructed to treat their men well. Periodically officers are encouraged (and sometimes coerced) to perform manual labor alongside enlisted personnel and to eat and bunk with them. Finally, officers must attend political meetings where their men are encouraged to criticize them. Most observers and defectors have commented favorably on the effectiveness of this program in maintaining high morale among enlisted personnel.

The other program aims at maintaining the tradition of closeness between the armed forces and the civilian masses. According to Party doctrine (based on Mao's teachings), the military must be so united with the civilian population that, if need be, it could move among them like fish swimming in water. This unity is sustained by frequent directives to soldiers and officers to treat civilians kindly and with respect, and by constant coordination between military and local civilian Party organizations. Civil-military unity is also put into practice. Military units stationed in rural areas contribute substantial amounts of labor during planting and harvest seasons and also aid some local capital construction projects. Because the PLA's enlisted troops are mostly young peasants, these occasional tours in the fields are probably welcomed as a refreshing change from military routine.

4. Other Functions

Finally, the GPD's organizational interests extend beyond political work *per se*. The GPD has a general responsibility for ensuring the combat-effectiveness of the PLA and for making sure that the Party's "army-building line and strategy" are followed. Among other things, the GPD is supposed to make sure that military as well as political discipline is upheld, that the PLA's services and combat arms "always maintain sound combat-readiness and high morale for training, and raise the military training, tactical, and technical levels of the troops."* The GPD has also been instructed by the Central Committee to see that the logistics service fulfills its tasks and that matériel,

* Central Committee's "Regulations Concerning Political Work in the PLA."

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armaments, finance, transportation, health, and production adequately meet the PLA's needs.

In wartime, the GPD is responsible for handling prisoners of war and for carrying out psychological warfare. Political officers performed these tasks in the Korean war and in the 1962 border war with India. This suggests that the GPD had, and probably still has, some intelligence capabilities, at least those required for psychological warfare planning and operations and for collecting information from prisoners of war. More importantly, in wartime the GPD is responsible for making sure that the armed forces "adhere consistently to the policies of operation of the Party Central Committee and its Military Affairs Committee."*

5. In Sum

The foregoing survey of the GPD's structure and functions indicates that it holds potent levers of influence over military personnel below its level. There is no avenue to success for the junior and middle grade officer except through Party membership and cooperation with the system of Party controls. Virtually all activity is carried on under the observation of some form of Party authority. Our best information shows that the political system administered by the GPD actually works and that the bulk of the military establishment is responsive to the Party.

III. CURRENT STATUS

A. As of November 1976

It is not yet known (as of early November 1976) what role the GPD played in the overnight purge of Leftist leaders that occurred a few weeks after Mao's death. The presence of GPD representatives in a 'victory' parade in Peking on 21 October 1976 and the appearance of the senior GPD Deputy Director at a diplomatic reception the next day (22 October) indicated that the GPD was still active and that Chang Chun-chiao's deputies in the GPD were not purged with him. An investigation into the GPD's ties with the purged Leftists, however, was probably begun and may still be going on.

The political control apparatus below the GPD appears to have been functioning normally since the October purge. Up until the purge, it had been leading a movement in the PLA to vilify former Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-ping who, among other things,

* Ibid.

was Chief of the General Staff when he was purged in April 1976. Since Mao's death on 9 September, attacks on Teng have diminished and increasing stress has been placed on loyalty to the Party, now headed by Chairman Hua Kuo-feng.

B. Whose Political Asset?

The GPD's role, if any, in Hua's "coup" seems to have consisted of withholding its support from its own Director, Chang Chun-chiao, the most important victim of the purge. The ease with which Chang was brought down, however, raises a question about the GPD's value as an asset in a political power struggle.

Obviously, being Director of the GPD did not help Chang much. But neither did his other, even more potent power-bases, the Secretariat and membership on the Standing Committee of the Politburo.* Circumstantial evidence, however, provides some plausible explanations as to why the GPD was of little value to Chang.

First, after becoming Director in January 1975, Chang did not, as far as is known, place any of his longtime proteges in the GPD. He thus apparently forfeited the advantage of controlling the organization—as the Chinese tend to—through long-tested subordinates. Instead, in staffing the organization, he relied—or was forced by the MAC to rely—almost exclusively on men who had been purged from the GPD system during the Cultural Revolution and who had since been rehabilitated. For example, confirmed reports show that Deputy Director Liang Pi-yeh has been in charge of the day-to-day administration of the GPD for the past year. Liang, a Deputy Director before the Cultural Revolution, was one of the first casualties of that campaign and was publicly humiliated by Red Guards on several occasions in 1967. It seems doubtful that Liang had much in common with Chang Chun-chiao, who looked to the Cultural Revolution, and his participation in it, to legitimize his own rise to power.**

* Reports agree that the four were arrested either at a Party meeting or in their homes by small military/security units.

** Besides Liang, three other rehabilitees of the Cultural Revolution were named to Deputy Director positions under Chang. They were Fu Chung, about 80, who had been a Deputy Director from 1954 to 1967; Hsu Li-ching, about 70, who had been a Deputy Director from 1964 to 1967; and Huang Yu-kun, in his mid-50s, who had been a political officer in the headquarters of the air force during the 1960s until he was purged in 1967. Of these three, Fu may have retired; he has not appeared since January 1976.

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Second, Chang evidently enjoyed little support among the majority of military leaders above the GPD level. These men were almost certainly apprehensive as to how Chang might use the GPD's political and security apparatus against them. They could look for protection and support to such figures as Defense Minister Yeh Chien-ying, who outranked Chang in both the MAC and the Politburo, and Chen Hsi-lien, the powerful Commander of the Peking MR on whose goodwill Chang depended. Chang reportedly made overtures to the military leadership in an effort to broaden his support. Indeed, his appointment—or acceptance—of experienced professional political officers within the GPD was probably a gesture to the very PLA leaders who were wary of his association with the political Left. These efforts failed to convince many senior military leaders that he would be responsive to their interests, however, [REDACTED]

In any case Hua apparently preempted Chang, moving before the latter had time to expand his influence in the military establishment or to exploit his position in the GPD. Had Chang remained GPD head he might have tried to “radicalize” the PLA below the GPD's level and thereby drive a wedge between the bulk of the military establishment and its generally conservative senior leaders. The prospect of Cheng pursuing such a course may have figured in Hua's decision to move against him and his Leftist colleagues at the earliest appropriate moment after Mao's death.

After Hua succeeded in becoming Party Chairman, the GPD apparently joined his camp immediately. In so doing, it was no doubt reflecting a clear preference for Hua over Chang, and in this sense was representing the political views of the military leadership.

IV. DEVELOPMENTS AND OUTLOOK

A. Developments

Two developments have affected the GPD in ways that are likely to influence its future performance.

1. Strengthening the Organization

The first is the gradual reconstruction that the GPD has undergone since 1969. The Cultural Revolution severely damaged the GPD—its Director and all his deputies were purged in 1967 and most of the GPD's

sensitive work was parceled out to new, *ad hoc* bodies. Although it was never terminated as an organization, its existence was not officially acknowledged between September 1967 and November 1969. The rebuilding process began in late 1969 with the appointment of a few senior leaders, but there was little indication of activity. Positive reconstruction advanced rapidly only after Chang Chun-chiao became Director in January 1975.

The GPD now appears to have its full complement of senior personnel and subdepartments, although some of the latter have not yet been publicly identified. Moreover, it now issues directives to the PLA on its own authority.

The process of further strengthening its bureaucratic structure will probably resume after the review of its involvement with the Leftists has been completed.

This trend points toward a growing concentration on organization and, by implication, on order and discipline. This would fit well with the apparent conservative bent of senior PLA leaders. While these leaders accept the subordination of the PLA to the Party, they would probably prefer a GPD that would supplement, rather than dominate, their efforts to strengthen China's defenses. This, in fact, may be part of the price that they will seek for supporting Hua, and, if so, it seems to be one that he will have to pay, at least initially. If this estimate is correct, we should see continued strengthening of the GPD and also see it align itself more closely with military concerns.

2. Status of the Director

The other noteworthy development has been in the character of the GPD's directors since the Cultural Revolution. Since 1967, their Party rank has moved steadily higher and their career profile has departed increasingly from that of the political officer corps.

The last Director before the Cultural Revolution, Hsiao Hua, a member of the Central Committee, was indeed a career political officer. However, the next incumbent, Li Te-sheng, was an alternate member of the Politburo when named Director in September 1970; he was a life-long troop commander rather than a political officer. He played an important part in the downfall of his boss, Defense Minister (and Mao's designated heir) Lin Piao, and was rewarded in 1973 by another promotion, this time to the Politburo's all-

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powerful Standing Committee where he became one of five newly-created Vice-Chairmen of the Party.

The third step in this process occurred when Chang Chun-chiao was named in January 1975 to replace Li, who declined in favor in 1973 and was demoted in 1974. Chang, like Li, was a member of the Politburo's Standing Committee. But Chang was a civilian whose background had been concentrated in the Party apparatus, especially in propaganda work.

Thus, over the past decade, incumbent directors moved from an ordinary Central Committee member to Politburo member and finally to the Politburo Standing Committee. At the same time, the directorship migrated out of the military's political career channel: from professional political officer to commander to civilian. This development provides eloquent evidence of the political sensitivity that attached itself to the control of the GPD during Mao's declining years.

This precedent, if continued, could lead to problems for the GPD. It could also provide a good indicator of the level of Party-military tension.

At present, Hua is probably so beholden to the military that he will accept their recommendation regarding candidates to head the GPD. If so, Hua will probably name a professional PLA political officer, such as the senior deputy director. (Even former GPD Director Hsiao Hua cannot be ruled out.) However, at some point, Chairman Hua may want his own man in that position and might even name another career Party cadre to the job.

B. Outlook

The outlook for the GPD will be governed by the balance to be struck between Chairman Hua and the military. Senior military leaders may want a number of things that Hua will be reluctant to provide. For

instance, they may want more autonomy from the Party in strictly professional military matters such as forming new, less-Maoist military doctrines. They may press for a larger military budget or for the purchase of more Western technology than Hua and other Party leaders desire.

They may also favor a greater degree of relaxation of tension with the Soviet Union—having a better sense of China's military inferiority—than will civilian leaders.

It will be in Hua's interest to strengthen his control over the military, and he will no doubt seek ways to do so. While Hua may be willing to grant the military more independence in military affairs, he probably will eventually want to get the PLA's political apparatus under his own control. The GPD would be a valuable asset to Hua in consolidating his position in the military and in fending off unreasonable demands.

It is too early to predict how the GPD will fare in this potentially fateful tug-of-war. Changes in the GPD's relations with the Party, appointments to leading posts in the GPD, and its behavior as an organization will serve as useful indicators to the process.

Even if Chairman Hua quickly asserts his leadership over the military, he can never be fully confident of the undivided loyalty of his military subordinates. He will need the indoctrinating and watch-dog services of the GPD, which itself will have to be watched and periodically reorganized.

Whether Hua will in fact be able to control the military is still an open question. The GPD is likely, however, to play an important part in his effort to do so.

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ANNEX

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GPD

The beginning, 1931-1935. The current GPD traces its lineage to 1931. In January of that year, a group of young Chinese Communists who had recently returned from Moscow seized control of the Party and set out immediately to strengthen their control over the "soviets" scattered about in mountainous regions of central and southern China. This "returned student" faction * organized a "Central Bureau of Soviet Areas" and under it, a "Central Revolutionary Military Committee" to unify their command over the military assets of the "soviets." Under this military committee, they created a "General Political Department" to centralize the Party's political work in the scattered military units. They named Mao Tse-tung, who was at the time the chief political officer of the largest component of the Red Army, to be the first Director of this new Department.**

* The faction included other Party leaders who were not returned students. Most important was Chou En-lai. Chou had sponsored many of the students for study in Moscow and supported their leadership of the Party after they returned in 1930. With the aid of their Comintern adviser, they gained control of the Party in 1931 and held on until their control over military affairs was successfully challenged by Mao Tse-tung at the Tsunyi Conference of January 1935. During the 1931-1935 period, Chou's support of the "returned students" was an important element in their power because Chou headed the Politburo's Military Affairs Committee (MAC). First organized in 1925, the MAC was the Party's principal policy and decision-making group for military affairs. Chou, who was at the time the Party's most experienced military-political leader, headed the MAC from 1926 to January 1935.

** There had been one earlier "General Political Department." At the "Nanchang Uprising," 1-5 August 1927, a "GPD" was organized as part of the Revolutionary Committee that led this uprising in Kiangsi province. This GPD faded away a month later with the defeat of the Uprising forces in another province. This short-lived predecessor of today's GPD was thinly staffed and accomplished little during the "southern expedition" that followed the collapse of the revolt at Nanchang. In the Party's postmortem of the Nanchang Uprising, weaknesses in political organization, in Party work among the troops, and in contacts with the civilian population were strongly criticized as major causes of the failure of the Uprising. Thus, the lessons learned from this defeat had a strong influence on the priority that the Party gave thereafter to political work in the military.

Mao headed the GPD for nearly a year. During 1931, the GPD probably amounted to little more than his own staff. Mao used the organization to strengthen his own position in the Kiangsi Soviet. The GPD carried out land reform in the soviet and organized the election of pro-Mao delegates to the First National Congress of Chinese Soviets held at Juichin, Kiangsi in November 1931. Mao and his supporters dominated the "government" established by this Congress.

This demonstration of how the GPD could be used was not lost on the central Party leadership. In order to weaken Mao's influence in the military, the "returned student" faction removed Mao from his GPD post shortly after the First Congress and replaced him with one of their own, 25 year-old Politburo member Wang Chia-hsiang.*

The returned student group could now go around Mao since they controlled key military positions both above and below him even though he was left with his title of First Political Officer of the Red Army: Chou En-lai headed the MAC to which Mao was subordinate, and now a "returned student" directed Mao's political-military staff. It was only a matter of time (less than two years) until the "returned students" eased Mao out of his job as First Political Officer and thus severely weakened him politically.**

Thus, in its first struggle between local military leadership and central political forces, the GPD was used as an instrument to undermine a prominent local leader (Mao) and strengthen the position of the dominant leadership group.

The "returned students" moved quickly to strengthen the GPD and, through it, the Party's

* Mao was 37 years old at the time.

** Mao lost his seat on the MAC in August 1932 and was replaced by Chou as First Political Officer of the Red Army in May 1933. Early in 1933 the "returned students" began a thinly disguised mass criticism campaign against Mao's military and political line.

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control of the Red Army in Kiangsi. They concentrated on building separate military and civil Party organizations and reduced military involvement in civilian political affairs. They drew up detailed regulations that spelled out for the first time the relationship between political officer and commander. They increased Party membership among soldiers from about one-third (under Mao) to nearly one-half of the total force.

By mid-1934, the GPD was strong enough to carry out a "red terror" against commanders who were falling back before the Nationalists' Fifth Encirclement Campaign. Sometime during this period, a political security network was organized in the Red Army. This network was controlled directly by the Central Committee and was not subordinated to the GPD; but it coordinated its activities with the GPD, and some of its operatives probably used affiliation with the GPD for "cover."

The Long March, 1935-1937. The second Director of the GPD, Wang Chia-hsiang, was severely injured in late 1934 in a Nationalist bombing raid. His wound forced him into semiretirement and opium addiction. As a consequence, acting directors or senior deputies ran the GPD until Wang finally relinquished the GPD directorship in 1950. The first of these was Chou En-lai, who was concurrently in charge of the MAC. At the famous Tsun-i Conference in January 1935, Chou turned the GPD over to the just-ousted Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), "returned student" faction leader Chin Pang-hsien.*

The Tsun-i Conference became the GPD's second experience in power struggle. Faced with defeats in Kiangsi that had forced the Party to commence its Long March, the conference was essentially a crisis of confidence in the Party's leadership. The main targets of criticism were the military policy and strategy of the "returned students" and their Comintern military adviser, Otto Braun, who had virtually taken over military command in mid-1934.

At Tsun-i, the Chinese Red Army commanders forced the "returned students" to turn over the chairmanship of the MAC to Mao Tse-tung. The "returned students" retained, however, the secretary-generalship of the Party (its highest office at the time)

* Chin, also known as Poku, was second only to Wang Ming in the "returned student" group and had led the Party since Wang's return to Moscow around September 1931.

and the directorship of the GPD. The GPD evidently did nothing to oppose the transfer of the Party's senior military post from Chou En-lai to Mao Tse-tung. Taking its cue from the leaders of the "returned student" group, the GPD acquiesced in the consequences of the obvious failures of their generalship. The "returned students" retained nominal leadership of the GPD until about 1938 when Mao transferred the acting directorship to Tan Cheng, one of his closest followers.

In the course of the Long March, the GPD suffered from the split between the forces led by Chang Kuo-tao and those led by Mao. The GPD, along with most of the General Staff, accompanied Chang while Mao took the staff of the MAC with him to Shensi Province in mid-1935. Little is known of the GPD in the period in which it was with Chang's Fourth Front Army; presumably, what was left of it rejoined Mao after Chang's troops suffered crushing defeats in western China in 1936. Also, it can be safely assumed that the work of the GPD was carried out in Mao's First Front Army by the staff of the MAC. After the two leaders' armies were reunited in 1936, Mao tended to centralize command and control of the Red Army in the MAC. One observer noted that in 1937 the GPD had become little more than the MAC's political work staff.*

The Anti-Japanese and Civil War, 1937-1950. During the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945), however, the GPD expanded rapidly.** In addition to its regular work in the military, it also was given the task of building up base areas behind Japanese lines. The GPD absorbed thousands of students who migrated to Yen-an in the late 1930s and used them as political workers in these base areas. After World War II, the GPD continued to expand as CCP forces grew during the second civil war with the Nationalists. Toward the end of the civil war, the GPD was particularly active in screening and indoctrinating Nationalists forces that had been captured or had surrendered.

In the brief hiatus between the civil war and the Korean war, the GPD vigorously supported the

* Chang Kuo-tao, *The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party, 1928-1938* (University Press of Kansas, 1972), p.494.

** During this war, while the Nationalist and Communist Parties joined forces against Japan, the GPD's name was changed to the "Political Department of the Eighth Route Army." Its status and functions remained unchanged, however, and after the war it resumed its traditional name.

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regime's plans to modernize and reduce the size of the military, which since 1948 was called the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The plan to cut the size of the PLA was shelved with the entry of the PRC into the Korean war.

The Korean War. The Korean conflict brought the GPD into modern warfare for the first time and presented it with novel problems. The GPD enthusiastically supported the war, organizing recruitment campaigns and establishing many new military schools to train new (or retrain old) officers. But on the Korean battlefield, fighting the world's strongest army, the PLA's political system tended to break down, especially after UN forces beat back the Chinese offensives in the spring of 1951. Political controls at company and battalion level were especially vulnerable, as casualties among experienced and thoroughly indoctrinated cadres were heaviest there, and replacements were difficult to find. The GPD's prestige also may have suffered from the fact that, although the Chinese succeeded in pushing the UN forces out of most of North Korea, they failed to validate Mao's dictum that a weak Communist force can defeat a strong "imperialist" army. Part of this failure stemmed from the GPD's lack of success in generating guerrilla warfare behind UN lines

Reaction to the Soviet Model. Another threat to the GPD's prestige came from an unexpected quarter. Through the early and mid-1950s the PLA accepted massive amounts of Soviet arms and training. With this aid came a different attitude toward the relationship between the Party and the military: the Soviets de-emphasized the Party and concentrated more on the military mission. Although the Soviets had altered the status of the political officer (commissar) from time to time, in the 1950s they favored the "unified command" of professional commanders, with political officers serving as deputy commanders. This approach was well received in the PLA, especially by young commanders who had experienced modern warfare in Korea. The Soviet model threatened the status of the Chinese political officer, and, by extension, the status of the whole Party structure in the military, including the GPD. Chinese political officers had always been co-equal with commanders, at least in principle. The Soviets also put less emphasis than the Chinese on close relations with the civilian population and on using the military as a labor force.

Adverse reaction to the Soviet model began in 1955 with the GPD playing a leading role. About this time Mao himself began expressing dissatisfaction with other features of the Soviet model: its pace seemed too slow and its methods too bureaucratic. Mao wanted faster economic development, quicker social change, and greater reliance on the masses.

In 1956, the GPD initiated a campaign in the military to *indirectly* criticize the political features of the Soviet model and strengthen the Chinese Communist political work tradition. Attacks were launched on "dogmatism," long a code word for uncritical imitation of the Soviets; officers (and later the whole army) were ordered to study and to be examined on Chinese Party history and theory; Party committees in the PLA were reorganized and their leading role stressed; and commanders were ordered to revive the pre-1949 tradition of close, friendly relations between officers and enlisted men. To emphasize the last point, the GPD in 1957 began a program of forcing all able-bodied officers to serve at least one month per year as ordinary soldiers. Political officers were given more combat training so that they could work more effectively with commanders. All these programs were merely an overture, however, to the intensive political work that was to saturate the PLA from 1958 to 1964.

In 1958 a fundamental change occurred in PRC military policy. This shift held major implications for army-Party relations and for the GPD. Until 1958, the Chinese had predicated their defense planning on a heavy reliance on the Soviet Union for both arms and training and for a nuclear umbrella. In early 1958, Chinese negotiators failed to get the substantial increases in military aid from the Soviet Union that they had hoped for, including help in developing nuclear weapons, without accepting Soviet controls over the PLA. Consequently, Mao and others took a decision in mid-1958 to rely no longer on the Soviet Union for military support but, instead, to modernize the PLA from China's own resources. This basic shift meant running a higher risk of a US and Chinese Nationalist invasion until PRC heavy industry and technology could meet the PLA's needs. But Mao was confident that the risks were acceptable and that military autarky could be achieved.

To rationalize the coming period of relative weakness, Mao insisted that his military concepts be revived as the heart of the PLA's military strategy and doctrine. This meant a revival of tight Party control

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over the military, a shift in emphasis away from modern weapons toward highly-indoctrinated troops,* and a reassertion of the tactics of protracted, guerrilla-type warfare that the Communists had carried out against the Japanese. Although Mao and others knew that such an army could not prevent an invasion, they were confident that it could eventually defeat any likely invader and that the prospect of such a defeat would deter any major invasion.

Substantial debate and controversy accompanied this decision. In retrospect, the principal issue probably was how best to make up for reduced or terminated Russian aid, and how and at what pace the Chinese arms modernization programs should be developed. Mao and Lin Piao opted for intensive politicization and fast-paced military/industrial schemes (as part of the Great Leap Forward). Defense Minister Peng Te-huai and GPD Director Tan Cheng apparently argued for continued development along more conventional lines laid down by the Soviet model that stressed military professionalism and a slower paced industrial program. Other GPD leaders may have favored Mao and Lin's initiative since the GPD's role in a Soviet-type system would have been diminished.

The 1958-1959 debate presented the GPD with an historic opportunity to act as a spokesman for professional military interests. Indeed, some top GPD officers may have attempted to do so; the GPD director was fired in late 1959 soon after Peng was dismissed. But the GPD as a whole conformed with Mao and Lin's new approach without a detectable murmur.

Politicization of the PLA. From 1960 to 1964, the GPD carried out the most vigorous political campaign the PLA had ever experienced. Throughout the period, the CCP's polemic against the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was forcefully reiterated in the PLA. "Dogmatism" came under severe attack, and the main focus of both political and military work shifted from large units (battalions and regiments, as stressed by the Soviets) to the smaller, hundred-man companies (long emphasized by Mao). Furthermore,

* The shift in emphasis from weapons to men did not mean that Mao denigrated the modernization of the PLA. Indeed, he wanted faster modernization than most military leaders at the time believed could be achieved from China's own resources. But for troop morale purposes, the human element was stressed and the power of modern weapons—not yet available—was belittled.

Party committees at all levels were strengthened and new GPD regulations on political work were promulgated in 1961 and 1963. These codes emphatically stated the primacy of the political chain-of-command and the precedence of political work over all other activities.* Mao's doctrines were trumpeted as applicable to every phase of military life and the world revolution as a whole. Party membership was expanded; criticism against many commanders took the form of struggle sessions and big-character posters (anticipating the Cultural Revolution by at least four years); model soldier heroes were created; and an evaluation system was devised that periodically checked the political fitness of each member and every unit of the PLA.

What had started in 1958 as a necessary re-orientation of the military away from Soviet influence and toward a more traditional Chinese approach gradually shifted toward an emphasis on intensive ideological indoctrination and purification. The campaign was successful in maintaining relatively high military morale and discipline during the economic crisis of 1960-1961. But the GPD's impulse toward political overkill was allowed to run virtually unchecked during the early 1960s.

On balance, the results of the GPD's efforts pleased Mao, and they probably played a large part in Mao's choice of Lin Piao, rather than Liu Shao-chi, to be his successor. By December 1963 the whole nation was instructed to follow the PLA's political example and imitate its practices and loyalty. Three months later, all government and commercial organizations were ordered to organize PLA-like political departments under their party committees in order to help them intensify their political work.

By 1965, a relaxation in the political atmosphere in the military occurred, but the Party did not allow it to last long. The officer corps soon came under criticism for complacency and arrogance and all ranks and insignia were abolished in order to diminish officers' tendency toward elitism. But the main political event of 1965 was the "debate" over how to defend the PRC against a feared expansion of the Vietnam war. The Party not only set the terms of this discussion, it also made estimates of how the invasion would unfold and

* The new regulations did not increase the amount of time allotted to political training, however. Then, as now, the PLA spent about one-third of its time on political training and two-thirds on military training.

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it dictated to the PLA how Chinese territory would be defended. Professional officers were accused of wanting to put up a conventional defense along China's frontiers with the PLA's main forces. The Party, on the other hand, stressed using the militia and promoted a strategy of drawing the US deep into China. In this "debate," the GPD acted as a channel for Party instructions to the PLA and evidently made little effort to communicate professional military advice to the Party. GPD Director Hsiao Hua survived while Chief-of-Staff Lo Jui-ching was purged; meanwhile, the "debate" flagged as the US showed no intention of attacking China and preparations for the Cultural Revolution began to absorb more and more of the GPD's attention.

The Cultural Revolution. In mid-1964 Mao had decided to carry out a political campaign of unprecedented force and scope, designed to remold the Party and revolutionize the whole country. After more than a year of preparation, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution got underway in late 1965 (officially in May 1966). In mid-1966, the "Cultural Revolution Group of the PLA" (PLA/CRG) was set up as a special body under the GPD; its first chief was a Deputy Director of the GPD.* The PLA/CRG was created to assist the Politburo's "Central Cultural Revolution Group" in carrying out the Cultural Revolution in the military, mobilizing the PLA's propaganda assets to support the movement throughout the country, and purging PLA officers likely to resist the Cultural Revolution as it unfolded.

About three months after the creation of the PLA/CRG, Mme. Mao criticized its head for resisting a large-scale purge in the PLA, and Lin Piao dismissed him. The early efforts of the GPD to channel and soften the Cultural Revolution in the military failed almost as soon as they had begun.

The PLA/CRG was reorganized in January 1967 and was taken away from the GPD. Its nominal new director was a Politburo member and one of the 10 marshals of the PRC named in 1955.** The new PLA/CRG director was to work under the "direct leadership of the Military Affairs Committee and the Central Cultural Revolution Group," the latter being

* This was Liu Chih-chien, who was also named the senior military representative to the Politburo's Cultural Revolution Group, organized at about the same time.

** This was Hsu Hsiang-chien, a prestigious officer and a Politburo member before the beginning of the Cultural Revolution.

Mme. Mao's center of operations. The new PLA/CRG director did little, so far as is known.

This arrangement also soon proved unsatisfactory. Before the end of January 1967 the new PLA/CRG director came under strong Red Guard attack and was dismissed in April. He was accused, among other things, of trying to block Mme. Mao's efforts to keep control of PLA/CRG activities and of being too much under the influence of GPD Director Hsiao Hua.

Next, the PLA/CRG was removed even farther from the GPD. It was placed under the direction of a triumvirate consisting of the Minister of Public Security, the Chief of the General Staff, and GPD Director Hsiao. This group lasted until the dramatic Wuhan Incident of August 1967 in which the Commander of the Wuhan Military Region (MR) appeared to be close to rebellion against the central government. As a result of the Wuhan Incident, the PLA/CRG was split into two separate bodies, and the GPD, along with its Director and all its remaining officers, dropped from sight.

For the remainder of the Cultural Revolution, PLA political work was supervised by these two groups: one used the PLA as an instrument to carry out the Cultural Revolution in the rest of society and the other approached the military establishment as a target of the Cultural Revolution.*

Rebuilding the GPD and the Purge of Lin Piao. When Lin began to slip from Mao's favor in 1969, one of the first things that Mao evidently did was to rehabilitate the GPD. Wall posters in the summer of 1969 began to refer again to the GPD; in November 1969 a new GPD Deputy Director was named, and by about mid-1970 a new director was in place.** Of the first two deputy directors identified in the rebuilt

* The GPD, however, continued to function even though it ceased to act in its own name. By 1969 both these groups came to be dominated by two of Lin Piao's chief aides.

** Li Te-sheng was officially identified in September 1970 as the new Director of the GPD. Before the Cultural Revolution Li had been a career commander, rising to lead the 12th Army. During the Cultural Revolution Li, one of the few PLA leaders known to be a "leftist" activist, was promoted to Party and military chief of Anhwei Province. He became an alternate member of the Politburo at the 9th Party Congress in April 1969 and by late that year had become a member of the MAC. In mid-1970 Li moved from Anhwei to Peking and probably became GPD Director at that time if not earlier. By late 1970, he was probably named Commander of the Peking MR concurrently, in one of the first moves taken to remove proteges of Lin Piao.

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GPD, one was a protege of Lin but the other was not. The new Director, Li Te-sheng, definitely was not a Lin protege, and he probably played a role in building the case against Lin.

One may ask why the GPD did not nip Lin's 1971 "coup" attempt at an early stage. The answer probably is that Mao's plans to purge Lin called for building an overwhelming case against him. This took time. Furthermore, since only members of Lin's immediate family and personal staff were involved in his flight, it could have been that the GPD (or the Party's political security force) learned of Lin's flight plans too late to act. In any case, the GPD performed other functions nearly perfectly, preventing any military move against Peking during or after the purge of the man who had led the PLA since 1959 and who seemed destined to succeed Mao. Again, the GPD acted as a tool of Mao and the Party's other civilian leaders.

Rebuilding the bureaucracy of the GPD since the fall of Lin Piao has proceeded slowly. Li Te-sheng was rewarded for his role in the Lin Piao affair with a promotion to membership on the Politburo's Standing Committee and one of five Party Vice Chairmanships created in 1973. But he apparently soon lost favor with Mao and was transferred out of Peking in the closing days of 1973. The Director of the GPD during 1974 is still not known. At the Deputy Director level, developments also came slowly. Prior to its disappearance in August 1967, the GPD had had at least four principal Deputies; in the 1969-1975 period, only two Deputies were identified.* Only a few subordinate officials were identified during this period.

The GPD Under Chang Chun-chiao. In early January 1975, Chang Chun-chiao, another member of the Politburo's Standing Committee and a career Party cadre, was named Director of the GPD. Chang, who later in the month became second-ranking Vice Premier of the State Council, thus became one of the most powerful men in the PRC.**

* Tien Wei-hsin and Huang Chih-yung were identified as GPD Deputies in late 1969; Huang subsequently disappeared along with Lin Piao in late 1971 and his place was taken by Wei Po-ting. Wei was not officially identified, however, until mid-1974; he was transferred to the Chengtu MR sometime in 1976.

** From at least 1973 to October 1976, Chang probably acted as Secretary General of the Party and thus general supervisor of the Party's vast bureaucracy.

After Chang became Director, the GPD made a gradual but steady comeback. During 1975, four experienced political officers were named to Deputy Director positions: three were Deputies prior to the GPD's suspension in 1967, the fourth had been the head of the Air Force's Political Department. By early 1976, 15 subdepartment leaders and about 20 lower-ranking GPD figures had reappeared—nearly all had held positions in the pre-1967 GPD.*

Moreover, the GPD has become more active. It promoted Mao's political campaign against former Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-ping and resumed issuing major policy statements. In November it issued a "circular" to the PLA which directed military to participate in the "Learn from Ta-chai" campaign. This campaign, aimed primarily at the mechanization of agriculture by 1985, is a key part of an ambitious plan, endorsed by the Fourth National People's Congress in January 1975, to completely modernize China's economy and military forces by the year 2000. Military support for the "Ta-chai" campaign thus takes on strategic implications. Reminiscent of two similar directives published during the Great Leap Forward in 1959, the current "circular" commits the military to provide manpower and material support to rural communes "when conditions permit," in addition to making the PLA's own farms more efficient and reclaiming more waste land for agriculture.

More recently, the GPD has been active in discovering and suppressing opposition to the regime that exploded during the Tienanmen Incident (riot) of 5 April 1976. The GPD's Security Department tried to prevent the spread of pro-Teng propaganda in the PLA, and the Propaganda Department appeared to be keeping the PLA in step with the Party's gradual shift toward a more "Leftist" line.

Since the purge of Chang Chun-chiao, Mme. Mao, Wang Hung-wen, and Yao Wen-yuan in October 1976, the PLA's political apparatus has been working vigorously to transfer the loyalty that was once directed toward Mao to the new Chairman, Hua Kuo-feng. In addition, it is marching in step with the Party in attacking the Leftists, including Chang Chun-chiao, for, among other things, trying to use the PLA to overthrow Hua Kuo-feng.

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Conclusion

The history of the GPD reflects its importance as an arm of the Party. So far as we know, it has faithfully executed the Party's policies in the PLA, and it has succeeded in keeping the bulk of the military obedient

to the Party even during times of dangerous stress, such as the 1958-1959 controversy and the purge of Lin Piao in 1971.* The GPD's failure to support Chang Chun-chiao seems to be the only instance in which it has acted in the interest of the military.

* That is the GPD's main job: it cannot be expected to discover every potential political security case, and the top-level leaders implicated in the Lin Piao affair would have been primarily the concern of the political security apparatus, not the GPD, which lacked authority over them.

The record indicates that, until now at least, the GPD has been brought under ever-tighter Party control and has acted as an effective instrument of Party control over the PLA rather than as a lever of military influence on the Chinese political system.

Approved For Release 2004/07/08 : CIA-RDP79T00889A000900080001-2

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